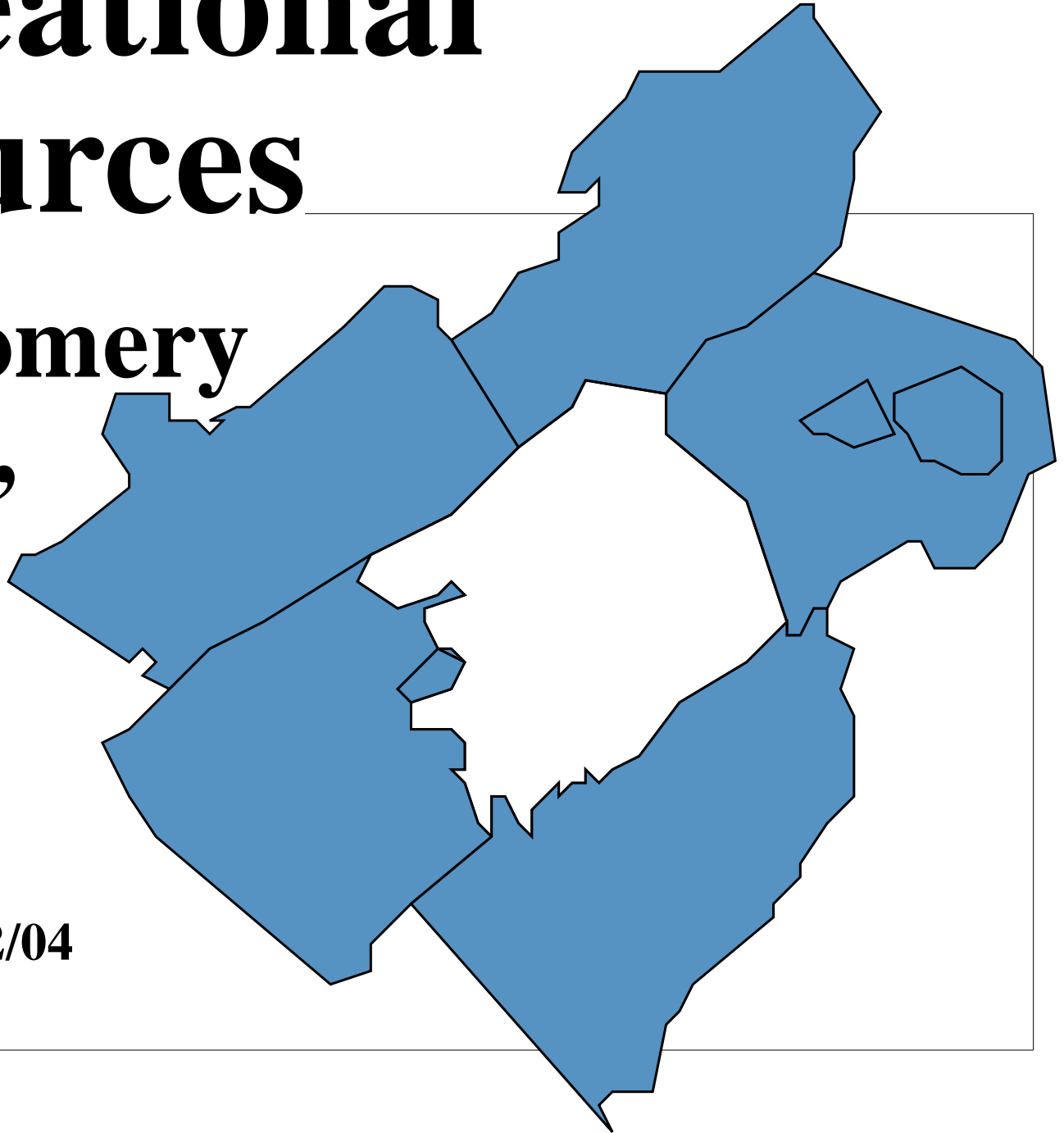


Recreational Resources

**Montgomery
County,
2025**

Adopted: 10/12/04



Parks and Recreation: Executive Summary

Montgomery County recognizes that parks, trails, and a wide variety of recreation opportunities contribute significantly to residents' quality of life. The Parks and Recreation chapter focuses on two key areas of interest:

- Local and regional approaches to the provision of parks and recreational opportunities, with an emphasis on regional collaboration and cooperation; and
- The provision of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities and programs, to better serve all residents of Montgomery County, including the expansion of the county's Heritage Trail system and the development of the recreational facilities included in the Outdoor Facilities Master Plan.

Parks and Recreation: Introduction

As the introduction to the County's Outdoor Facilities Master Plan indicates, parks and recreational opportunities are major contributors to the County's quality of life. In Montgomery County, the natural setting provides a wide range of recreational opportunities: hiking in the Jefferson National Forest, fishing in the county's streams and rivers, tubing on the New River, and bird-watching near Pandapas Pond. The two universities, Virginia Tech in Blacksburg and Radford University in the City of Radford, contribute to the cultural recreation (plays, art exhibits, concerts, and guest speakers). Indeed, many of the recreational opportunities available in Montgomery County are provided by agencies and individual organizations than the County government.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS:

Community survey participants were asked about four park and recreation-related issues: 1) individual recreational opportunities, including bikeways, walkways, and nature and heritage trails; 2) traditional parks (playgrounds, picnic areas, ballfields, etc.); 3) river access (boating, fishing, and tubing); and 4) special use facilities (golf courses, skateboard parks, etc.). Of the four issues, individual recreational opportunities scored the highest, although none of the issues scored at or above the mean score for all issues.

Both in terms of overall mean score (3.58) and in terms of citizen comments, individual recreational opportunities proved to be the most popular recreation issue with community survey participants. Of those who participated, 61% rated the provision of individual recreational opportunities, including trails and bikeways, as either important or very important. Two factors may account for participant interest in individual recreational opportunities: 1) the majority of participants in the community survey were age

35 and above, less likely to be involved in scheduled group or team activities, and preferred unscheduled recreational opportunities; and 2) participants were more likely to view trails and bikeways, specifically, as alternative transportation locations and as a means of access to nature. Citizen comments underscored the connection between trails and the desire to have easier access to nature and natural areas. As one participant suggested, Montgomery County needed to "construct more nature preserves for observation of wildlife & vegetation & outdoor exercise." Others suggested that the parks in rural areas should be focusing on providing opportunities for hiking, biking, and picnicking and providing

residents with increased access to "natural areas." Many of the participants who encouraged the expansion of the trail system in Montgomery County, also expressed an interest in seeing the trail system connected to other existing systems in neighboring jurisdictions (Bissett park trails in Radford, the New River Valley Trail in Pulaski County, and the National Forest trails near Pandapas Pond) or expanded to provide access to the New and Little Rivers as well as the villages (Riner, Shawsville, Elliston, Plum Creek, and Prices Fork).

Traditional parks had a mean score of 3.47, with 56% of participants rating them either as important or very important. Despite the fact that slightly more than half the participants rated

traditional parks fairly high, the subject generated very few specific comments, although a few participants did note the need for an increased number of ball and soccer fields.

River access and special use facilities ranked significantly lower than either individual recreational opportunities or traditional parks. Of those who participated in the community

survey, 44% rated river access as important or very important and 29% rated special use facilities, most notably golf courses, as either important or very important. These numbers, however, may be misleading, especially in terms of the issue of river access. Citizen comments about trails and bikeways and access to natural areas centered on, among other issues, increased

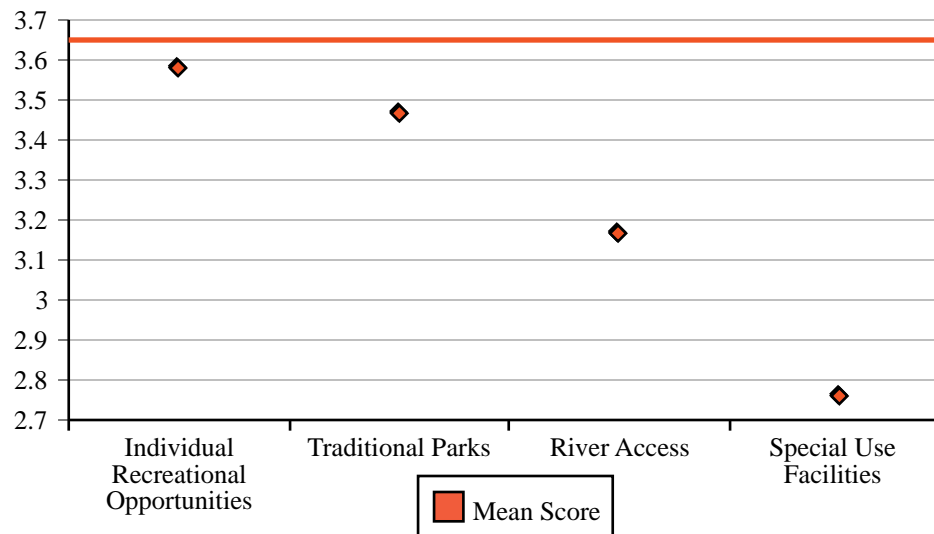
bicycle access to the New River. The river access issue was presented as a sportsman-related issue (increased opportunities for boating and fishing), which may have led participants who want to be able to bike or walk along the river to give the issue a lower score than they might have if the issue had been less narrowly framed.

Special use facilities had one of the lowest mean scores on the survey (2.76) and was one of the few issues where more respondents rated it as “not important” (11%) than as “very important” (9%). In addition, the comments suggested virtually no support for publicly provided golf courses. It should be noted, however, that special use facilities, especially skateparks, were one of the significantly divergent issues between the community and student survey responses and may well reflect generational differences in the definition of recreation.

The student surveys suggested fairly strong support for increased recreational opportunities, special use facilities (such as pools, skateparks, paintball facilities, and climbing walls), and a broader range and greater number of county supported sport and non-sport related activities. The most common complaint registered in the student surveys was that there was “nothing to do” in Montgomery County. Respondents felt there was a very real need for more activities and opportunities for youth. This was especially true for students in the outlying areas, including Riner, Prices Fork, Elliston, Belview, and Shawsville.

It should be noted that students were not the only respondents who felt that youth activities were lacking and that there needed to be a greater emphasis on all sorts of recreation in Montgomery County. As one citizen survey respondent noted, there is “Nothing -Nothing - Nothing for 13-20 year old to do socially on weekends, if not involved in sports... Lived here 30 years--always been a problem.” Another wrote that the county “needs more recreational and educational development for children under

Parks and Recreation: Community Survey Mean Results, 2003



| | Mean Score |
|--|------------|
| Individual Recreational Opportunities (Trails, Bikeways, etc.) | 3.58 |
| Traditional Parks | 3.47 |
| River Access | 3.17 |
| Special Use Facilities (Golf Courses, Skate Parks, etc.) | 2.76 |
| Mean Score for All Issues | 3.65 |

Note: Forty-one issues were included in the “rate this issue in terms of importance” portion of the community survey. A mean score was calculated for each of the 41 issues, as well as for the total of all issues. Issues with scores higher than 3.65 (the mean for all issues) indicate that the majority of respondents rated the issue greater importance; a score lower than 3.65 indicates that the majority of respondents rated the issue of less importance than the on average. The scale for the survey was: 0=no response; 1= not important; 2=minimally important; 3=moderately important; 4=important; and 5=very important. Source: 2003 Community Survey, Montgomery County, Virginia.

Distribution of Park and Recreation Facilities, 2003

| Type of Park / Recreational Facility | Number/Size | Location |
|--|---|--|
| Overall Amount of Park/Recreational Land | 143 acres 291 acres 11 acres n/a | Montgomery County (MC) Blacksburg (B) Christiansburg (C) MC Public Schools (MCPS) |
| Linear Miles of Trails | 5 miles 27 miles 1 mile | Montgomery County Blacksburg Christiansburg |
| Number of Undeveloped/Developing Parks | 3 3 4 | Blacksburg Christiansburg Montgomery County |
| Arboretum | 1 | B |
| Basketball Court | 34 | B,MCPS,C,MC |
| Baseball/Soccer/Multi-purpose Fields | 63 | B,MCPS,C,MC |
| Disc Golf Course | 1 | MC |
| Gardens | 2 | B,MC |
| Golf Course | 1 | B |
| Horseshoe pits | 15 | B,C,MC |
| Indoor Nature Center | 1 | B |
| Inline Hockey Area | 1 | B |
| Model Airplane Field | 1 | MC |
| Nature Trail | 1 mile | B |
| Picnic Shelter | 16 | B,MCPS,C,MC |
| Playgrounds | 42 | B,MCPS,C,MC |
| Recreation Center/Activities Buildings | 3 | B,C,MC |
| Restrooms | 5 | B,MC |
| Skate Park | 1 | B |
| Swimming Pool | 2 | B |
| Tennis Courts | 29 | B,MCPS |
| Volleyball Courts | 1 | B |
| Walking/Jogging Trail | 8 | B,C, MC |

Source: Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Department, Outdoor Facility Master Plan, January,2003 Draft.

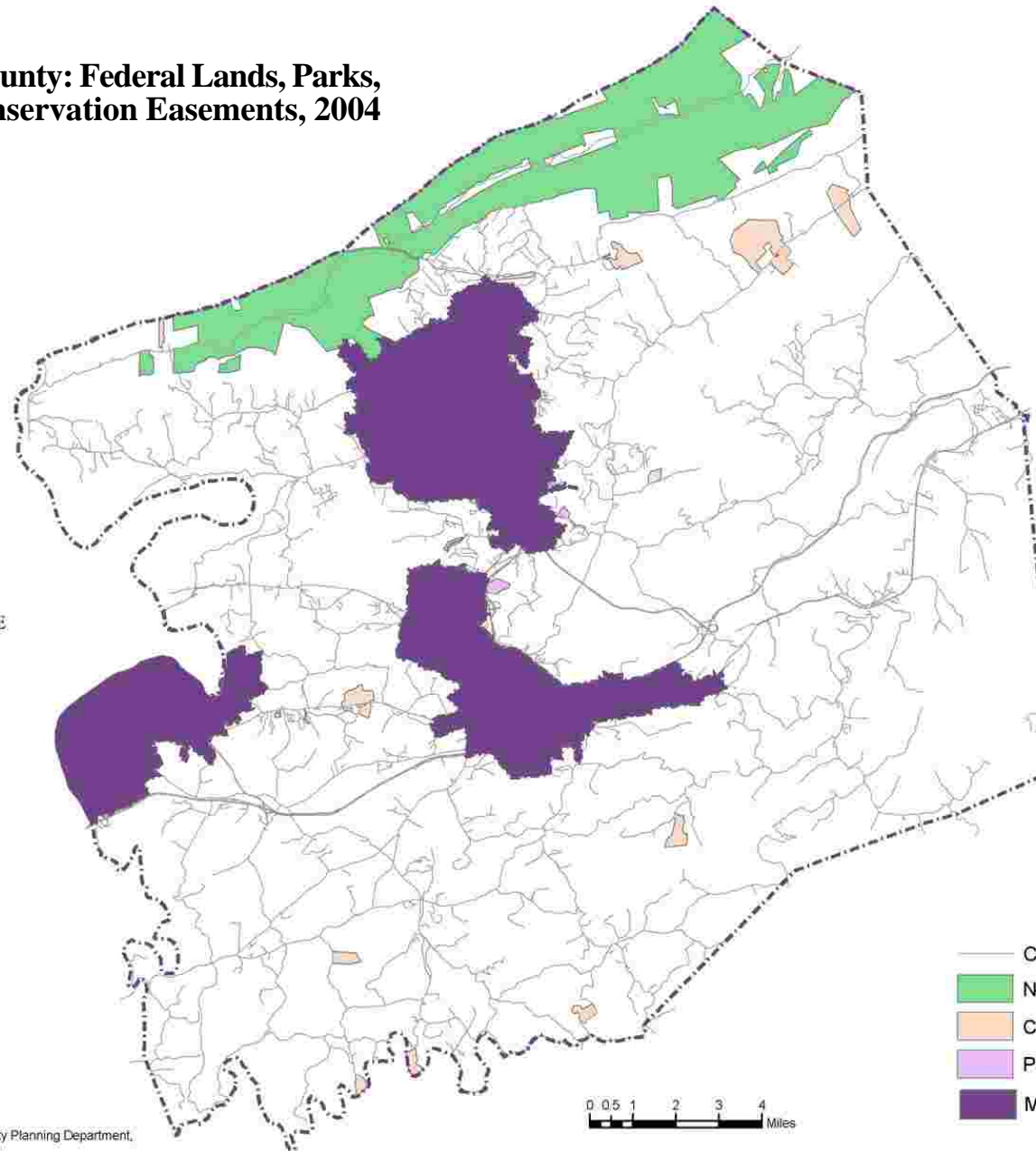
school age.” A third felt that town and county officials needed to “promote youth events.” A number of the respondents broadened the discussion by suggesting the County place a greater emphasis on recreational opportunities and facilities for families. Regardless of focus, however, the community survey and the student survey respondents felt that the county needed to do far more to provide a broader range of recreational opportunities and facilities than had been done to date.

CURRENT AND HISTORICAL TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

There is very little argument that Montgomery County is well below the level of services and facilities recommended by the Virginia Outdoor Plan. What is arguable, however, is why. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Montgomery County has significant National Forest recreational opportunities (most notably at Pandapas Pond), privately owned recreational opportunities and facilities, (New River Junction and the publicly available hiking opportunities on the Nature Conservancy Lands), and a broad range of activities offered through Virginia Tech and non-profit organizations like the YMCA. In addition, the majority of the population lives in the two towns, both of which provide access to recreational opportunities to their residents, as well as to residents outside of the towns’ limits for a fee. Because of these outside resources, Montgomery County has not had to provide as much in terms of recreational programs and facilities as might otherwise be the case.

In the past, limited fiscal and capital resources, have meant that the county has had to concentrate their facilities in the center portion of the county, accessible to the largest percentage of residents, most notably at Mid-County Park. In recent years, however, the county has significantly increased the number of parks in the county, as well as diversifying the types of parks. In the past 15 years, the County has added

Montgomery County: Federal Lands, Parks, and Private Conservation Easements, 2004



Legend

- County Roads
- National Forest
- Conservation Easements
- Parks
- Municipalities

Prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Department,
GIS and Mapping Services, 6/10/04

the Huckleberry Trail and the Coal Mining Heritage Park and Science Center (under development), as well as three traditional parks (two in Plum Creek and one in McCoy). In addition, Montgomery County has undeveloped park land in the Mt Tabor district (AEP Property near Blacksburg), Christiansburg (adjacent to the County Courthouse), and Elliston (adjacent to the south fork of the Roanoke River).

The County also provides significant outdoor recreational opportunities through multi-use agreements with the Montgomery County Public Schools, including community access to ballfields, tennis courts, and playgrounds.

In 2003, the Montgomery County Department of Parks and Recreation developed the Montgomery County Outdoor Facilities Master Plan. The plan made recommendations for the development of the county's park system based on level of service standards, established by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and on a needs assessment conducted by the DCR in conjunction with the 2002 Virginia Outdoor Plan. Facility needs were based on three criteria: standards, demand, and resources. The goals included in *Montgomery County, 2025* reflect not only the facility recommendations from the Outdoor Facilities Master Plan, but also public comment and concerns from the Community Survey.

| Montgomery County Outdoor Recreational Facilities Levels of Service (LOS), 2003 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Facility | DCR Recommended Levels of Service (LOS) | Current LOS in Montgomery County | Recommended LOS included in 2003 Outdoor Facility Master Plan |
| Parkland | 10 acres per 1000 residents (836.3 acres) | 5.3 acres--all jurisdictions; (5.2 acres (unincorporated areas) | Suggested increase, but no specific numeric recommendations |
| Archery Range | 1 per 50,000 residents | 0 (0) | 1 range |
| Baseball Fields (Youth) | 1 per 6,000 (13.9 fields --all jurisdictions; 5.5 in unincorporated areas. | 25 (14) | 13 additional |
| Basketball Courts | 1 per 5,000 (16.7 courts--all jurisdictions; 15 in unincorporated areas. | 33 (15) | Suggested increase, but no specific recommendation. |
| Football/Soccer Fields | 1 per 10,000 (8.3 fields-- all jurisdictions; 3 in unincorporated areas) | 28 (6) | 12 additional |
| Golf | 9 holes per 25,000/18 holes per 50,000 (30 holes--all jurisdictions; 9.87 holes in unincorporated areas) | 1 public course-9 hole; 1 private 9 hole; 2 private courses 18 hole (54) | Add additional 9 hole Public Course |
| Horseshoes | 1 per 10,000 (8.3 lanes-- all jurisdictions; 3 in unincorporated areas | 15 (2) | Not included |
| Skateboard Park | 1 per 25,000 (3.3--all jurisdictions; 1 in unincorporated areas | 1 (0) | 6 additional |
| Tennis Courts | 1 per 2,000 (41.8--all jurisdictions; 13.7 in unincorporated areas | 29 (16) | 12 additional |
| Playgrounds Note: This represents a partial list from the Outdoor Master Plan needs assessment. State LOS standards can be found at http://www.dcr.state.va.us/prr/docs/vop2002.pdf --Virginia Outdoor Plan, pgs 379-382. | | | |

Recreational Resources: Goals

PRC 1.0 Regional Cooperation and Collaboration: To encourage the multi-use of existing facilities, while encouraging regional approaches to new recreation opportunities, which provide the broadest range of recreational experiences to all residents of Montgomery County, including those who live in Christiansburg and Blacksburg.
(1).

PRC 1.1 Local Cooperation: Continue to work with the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg and with county schools to develop regional policies, facilities, and programs for the benefit of all residents of Montgomery County.

PRC 1.1.1 Joint Meetings: Initiate regular meetings between town and county recreation directors followed by joint meetings of the three recreation commissions.

PRC 1.1.2 Large Town Policies: Investigate recreational policies of other Virginia counties with large towns in order to evaluate alternative plans of action for county recreation.

PRC 1.1.3 Regional Master Plan: Develop a “regional master plan” to avoid duplication of similar facilities and programs between towns and county.

PRC 1.1.4 Facility Sharing: Coordinate facility sharing and "program-sharing" between the county, the county schools and the towns through cooperative agreements and/or a uniform policy on the use of recreational facilities. (2)

PRC 1.1.5 Regional Parks Authority: Evaluate the feasibility of establishing a Regional Parks Authority.

PRC 1.1.6 Special Events. Work with neighboring jurisdictions and local organizations to organize and sponsor special events, including festivals and concerts.

PRC 1.2 Private / Non-Profit: Work with private and non-profit civic clubs to develop new and enhance existing sport leagues throughout the County (e.g., New River United Soccer Association).

PRC 1.2.1 Sports Needs: Determine the needs and desires of existing sport leagues in the county and the appropriate role of the county in meeting these needs.

PRC 1.2.2 Public/Private Partnership Facilities: Develop clear policies for the future use of facilities that are constructed and/or maintained with funding from non-profit groups.

PRC 1.3 Cooperative Agreement: Work to establish cooperative agreements with Virginia Tech, Radford University and the City of Radford for facility sharing that will benefit all citizens of Montgomery County.

PRC 1.3.1 Kentland Farms: Work with Virginia Tech to open the 4+ miles of New River frontage to recreational use by both students and county residents.

PRC 1.3.2 Trail Linkage: Develop a trail system that will link to the City of Radford and the two universities to better meet the needs of the student population and city residents (e.g. Kentland Farms river access and Dedmon Center & Bissett Park).

Cross References and Notes:

1. Local and Regional Cooperation are a central theme to this plan. Additional references to cooperative and collaborative approaches is addressed in PNG 1.0: Local and Regional Cooperation (pg.66) and footnote.
2. Facility Sharing is incorporated under the heading of multi-use and is addressed in PNG 3.0 Access (pg. 67).

PRC 2.0 Recreational Facilities and Programs . To provide a broad variety of recreational opportunities and traditional and special use facilities for all citizens of Montgomery County, with special attention to the recreational needs of youth, young adults, and senior citizens. (3)

PRC 2.1 Outdoor Facility Master Plan (OFMP): Revise, formally adopt, and use the Outdoor Facility Master Plan as a guide for the development of new parks and recreational facilities, including pocket, neighborhood, village, and regional parks, as well as special use facilities, trails, and heritage parks.

PRC 2.1.1 Recreational Priorities and Funding: Decide on the top projects in the OFMP and develop funding strategies for them including incorporation into the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), use of grant funds and other sources of funding.

PRC 2.1.2 Cash Proffers: Evaluate cash proffers as a funding tool for recreation facilities identified in the OFMP that are necessary to meet the recreational needs of an increasing county population.

PRC 2.1.3 Operational and maintenance needs: Broaden the OFMP to better address indoor facilities as well as operational and maintenance needs.

PRC 2.1.4 Village Plans: Work with residents in each of the villages to address recreational needs in their Village Plans, including community, neighborhood, pocket, and tot parks and walkway/bikeway facilities. (5)

PRC 2.2 Accessibility: Make existing recreational facilities accessible to all county residents, both in terms of how the facilities are accessed and used.

Cross References and Notes:

3. Recreational facilities include traditional regional parks, multi-use sports facilities (developed in conjunction with the public schools), community and neighborhood parks, Heritage Parks and Trails, pocket parks, and tot parks, as well as special use facilities.
4. Cash proffers are more fully addressed in PLU 2.2: Proffer Guidelines (pg. 48).
5. Villages and Village planning are addressed in PLU 1.7: Villages (pg.43); PLU 1.6 Village Expansion Areas (pg.41); and PNG 4.0 Villages and Small Communities (pg.68).

PRC 2.2.1 Facility Location: Develop major facilities in areas that are accessible by major roads thereby providing the opportunity for existing and/or future bus services.

PRC 2.2.2 Facility Accessibility: Develop a plan to ensure that existing and new facilities are accessible to all Montgomery County residents, with special attention to the needs of differently-abled residents, by meeting the accessibility standards established under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

PRC 2.3 Trails: Provide a high quality trail network, based on a series of trails and activity or education nodes, throughout the county, which offers both increased individual and family recreational opportunities and alternative transportation routes between jurisdictions and outlying villages. (6)

PRC 2.3.1 New River Trail Linkage: Support New River Valley Planning District Commission efforts to develop a multi-jurisdictional plan for linking the Huckleberry Trail to the New River Trail via Christiansburg and Radford.

PRC 2.3.2 Business/Industrial Park Trail: Develop bikeway/walkway trails in existing and proposed business/industrial parks.

PRC 2.3.3 Trails and Nodes: Develop recreation facilities in collaboration with the County and Towns master plans for trails (including bikeways and walkways).

PRC 2.4 Commercial Recreational Facilities: Encourage the development of for-profit, privately-owned recreational facilities in the County when they are sited in appropriate locations.

PRC 2.5 Planning Review: Involve the Parks & Recreation Commission in the review of rezoning and special use permit requests for recreation facilities desiring to locate in the unincorporated areas of the County.

Cross References and Notes:

6. Trails are also addressed in CRS 3.2 Heritage Parks and Trails System (pg.83) and TRN 4.2 Bikeways, Walkways, and Trails (pg. 224).